

CUBA

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Evening:

Will you show this to President
and then put in his file. He
saw an earlier draft, but this
is more accurate in his own
statements

Asst. B

U.S.A

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~

March 4, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

You asked me the other night why I didn't call you the evening of the 15th of October, when Ray Cline reported the hard evidence of MRBM's in Cuba to me (at about 8:30 p.m.). I'm not sure I gave you a full answer, and you really need it for your memoirs-- and perhaps even sooner if some reporter asks you. As I remember it, my thinking was like this:

1. This was very big news, and its validity would need to be demonstrated clearly to you and others before action could be taken. The blow-ups and other elements of such a presentation would not be ready before morning. I was satisfied that the word was going out quietly to those with an immediate need to know. The one obvious operational need was for more photography, and that was in hand.
2. It was a hell of a secret, and it must remain one until you had a chance to deal with it. Thus everything should go on as nearly normally as possible; in particular there should be no hastily summoned meeting Monday night. Chip Bohlen and I, for example, should not leave a dinner at my house where there were knowledgeable foreign guests, and others, I knew, were in the same spot.
3. On the other hand this was not something that could be dealt with on the phone except in the most limited and cryptic terms. What help would it be to you to give you this piece of news and then tell you nothing could be done about it till morning?
4. Finally, I had heard that you were tired. You had had a strenuous campaign week end, returning from Niagara Falls and New York City at 1:40 Monday morning.
5. So I decided that a quiet evening and a night of sleep were the best preparation you could have in the light of what would face you in the next days. I would, I think, decide the same again unless you tell me different.

McG. B.
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